



# Public Relations *Manual*

2018 edition

**Legion** 





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# Introduction and welcome

Public relations (PR) has always been key to the Legion's success, but it plays an even more important role today. This manual provides information you will need as a Public Relations Officer (PRO) to effectively participate in or lead PR efforts, from organizing events to dealing with the news media.

A PRO's level of experience and knowledge of PR varies widely, so this manual has very basic information and tips as well as more advanced suggestions for those who wish to go beyond those basics. The content is supplemented by how-to checklists and specific tips on everything from how to hold a news conference to how – and why – to set up a donor recognition program. There's a glossary of need-to-know PR and PR-related terms, and word links throughout this guide to take you to relevant definitions.

**Public relations involves building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with an organization's publics through timely and honest communications, events, and activities undertaken in the public interest, and a consistent adherence to the organization's brand, including its core values.**

As the PRO, you are primarily guided by the Legion's mission to:

- support Veterans, including currently serving military and RCMP personnel, and their families;
- promote Remembrance, and;
- contribute to community and country.

You are guided by Legion values, including doing your part to ensure that the Legion culture is welcoming, friendly and inclusive for all. Everything we say and do must be true to our Legion values of service, integrity, respect, loyalty and teamwork. (See Legion messaging.)

## YOUR PR MISSION

As a PRO, you will take the lead on or assist with some or all of the following:

**Community relations** – An organization's planned, active, and continuing participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the organization and the community. It can involve partnerships, financial contributions and/or public participation.

**Customer relations** – The planning and implementation of activities designed to enhance and maintain an organization's relationship with current and potential customers.

**Donor relations** – Dealing and communicating with individuals and organizations who make monetary and/or in-kind donations.

**Marketing communications** – Advertising, promotion, and direct marketing activities focused on selling goods or services. Tools include posters, flyers, event signage, and point-of-purchase displays.

**Media relations & publicity** – Dealing and communicating with the news media when seeking earned media or responding to reporters' questions.

**Member relations** – interacting and communicating with current and potential Legion members. Primary activities revolve around recruitment and retention.

**Publicity** – Earning coverage in the news media: newspaper, radio and television.

As the PRO, you are most likely to find yourself performing some or all the following tasks:

- promoting Legion events, activities, and initiatives internally and externally
- providing copy for print and online event calendars
- responding to media inquiries and directing reporters to key personnel
- creating content for the website
- managing and/or helping with event logistics
- working with photographers and/or taking photos
- earning positive news coverage in local media
- managing and/or contributing to social media accounts
- writing and editing various materials such as newsletter articles, plans, and letters

**If you're just beginning in this role, check with your local executive so you know exactly what is expected of you.**

# Getting started as PRO

Below are some tools you can use and resources you can consult and/or create as you get into your role as PRO.

If you have any questions about any of these resources, or anything else in this manual, please contact the Dominion Command communications manager, Nujma Bond: [nbond@legion.ca](mailto:nbond@legion.ca). 613-591-3335, extension 241.  
Toll-free: 1-888-556-6222

## LEGION RESOURCES

Go to the Legion's member services portal <http://portal.legion.ca/registration> and register so Dominion Command can provide you with helpful information – available to all members – in a timely fashion. *There is also material to help PROs under Branch and Command Resources / Marketing and Public Relations.*

Visit [www.legion.ca](http://www.legion.ca) regularly to keep up to date on a variety of Legion services, from the latest news releases from Dominion Command to informative and relevant articles. Subscribe to the mailing list to receive updates on the Legion's national activities and advocacy efforts <http://www.legion.ca/subscribe>.

Follow the Legion on one of more of several social media platforms, including:

[Legion.ca](http://Legion.ca)  
[Facebook.com/CanadianLegion](https://Facebook.com/CanadianLegion)  
[Twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion](https://Twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion)  
[Instagram.com/royalcanadianlegion](https://Instagram.com/royalcanadianlegion)  
[Youtube.com/user/RCLDominionCommand](https://Youtube.com/user/RCLDominionCommand)

## GOOGLE ALERTS

PROs play a key role in creating positive messages. However, it is equally important at times for the PRO to be aware of what others are saying about the Legion. One way to keep informed is to sign up to receive emails when new results show up in Google Search.

These Google alerts (LINK TO: <https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/4815696?hl=e>) will give you a heads-up on any issue that could affect a branch, a command or the entire Legion. Some of the information you receive also could be good content for your social media accounts.

## MEDIA LIST

This is a list of local media outlets with contact information for key people who can print/air news about your branch. If you have received a media list from your predecessor, update it if necessary. If you need to create your own, you'll find guidelines in *Get to know your local media*.

## PHOTO AND/OR VIDEO RELEASE FORM

If you, or someone acting on your behalf, takes photographs of others to use on your website, on social media, or in a newsletter, you should have a release form available for them to sign to protect you if any subject claims his or her right to privacy was not protected.

You'll find an example of a video/photo release form [here](#)

**Whatever your role and tasks, you are expected to adhere to Legion and legal conventions at all times. (See *Legal issues*)**



# How to create a basic communication plan

The steps you take to communicate with audiences require careful planning. To help reach your goals, develop a communication plan that includes answers to the following

## 1. ***What do you want to accomplish?***

**Strategic goal** – An overall, and sometimes long-term, result to be achieved. Goals often are aspirational and nonspecific.

*Example:* Increase branch membership

**Objective** – The specific result (knowledge, opinion, action) sought with a specific audience.

*Examples:*

To increase membership by 15 per cent in the coming year.

To create and communicate an overall message about the benefits of branch membership.

## 2. ***Who can help you accomplish it?***

**Stakeholders** – those individuals or groups who can affect or be affected by the Legion actions, policies, and procedures. Stakeholders affect us in different ways. Some can have a significant impact on the Legion's ability to thrive – even survive – while the influence of others is minimal.

*Examples:* current members, local Veterans, those in the community who support Veterans

**Publics** – individuals or groups of stakeholders who can affect or be affected by the organization's actions, policies, and procedures. Publics can form when an organization determines it wants or needs something from a specific group or they may form themselves based on their interest in issues surrounding an organization. They can be defined in a common way such as members, customers, voters, patrons, etc.

*Examples:* branch members, branch customers, non-member Veterans, local Veterans' groups, senior cadets, local residents who support Veterans and Veterans' issues

### 3. ***To whom do you direct your message?***

**Audience** – those among your publics and/or stakeholders to whom a message is sent.

*Examples:* branch members, branch customers, local Veterans' groups, senior cadets, local residents who support Veterans and Veterans' issues

### 4. ***How do you accomplish it?***

**Strategy** – the means (overall concept, approach, or general plan) for reaching a goal or objective.

*Example:* Communicate the benefits of branch membership to those who support Veterans

**Tactics** – the how-to's, i.e., things to do and say to implement a strategy to reach those whose support will help or whose opposition will hinder the success of a plan.

*Examples:*

Create and distribute a recruitment poster for the branch  
Add a member benefits post to the branch Facebook page  
Hold an event for local Veterans (coffee day, seminar),  
Send letters/emails to community leaders

Everything your branch does must demonstrate that you are just as concerned with the needs and well-being of your stakeholders as with your own. Your actions must back up your messages and vice versa. In addition, if outside factors force you to undertake an action that will not be popular, your message will be key to at least helping them understand the circumstances that brought this about.

### 5. ***Did you meet your objective(s)?***

The final step is to evaluate what you have done. Did you meet your goal or objective? Why or why not? Use the information you gather to help you plan future messages.

# Creating your messages

Here are six things to keep in mind when writing messages.

**1. *Know your audiences – their information needs and interests***

When writing your message, focus on what your audience wants to hear instead of what you want to say. In many cases, the two will be in harmony, i.e., you want to give your audience information on how they can join your branch and that is exactly what they want to know. At times, however, the audience may not yet be at that stage, so you have to focus more on the why (to join the branch) than the how.

**2. *Focus on audience benefits***

“What’s in it for me?” that question is at the forefront of your audience’s minds as they make quick decisions on whether or not your message – one of thousands coming their way every day – has information on how their needs will be met. If it benefits them, they may at least consider what it is you want them to know. For example, instead of simply highlighting how an event will help the branch, pinpoint how attending will offer rewards such as having a good time, meeting people, etc.

**3. *Pay as much attention to nonverbal messages as you do to words***

Words are just one part of a PR message. Pay attention to colours, fonts, visuals and other nonverbal elements that can help make your message powerful and memorable. In addition, when you use visuals, such as photos, make sure the subjects and content send a proper message about your branch.

**4. *Pay attention to message timing***

Your message must be delivered at a time that is most relevant, appropriate, and meaningful to your audiences. Try to take advantage of an event or issue “in the news” or trending at the time, and to use it as a hook for your message. This also could include a relevant holiday or observance such as a major

military anniversary or a week, day or month set aside to focus attention on an issue relevant to Veterans. Examples include May's Mental Health Week, International Day of UN Peacekeepers, National Aboriginal History Month, and D-Day (June).

**5. Choose media credible with your audiences**

Send your message via the communications channel your audience finds most credible and most useful. Don't overlook word of mouth – a process where information and opinions are passed on informally via such channels as social media and personal communication.

**6. Remember, actions speak louder than words**

Messages are sent not only through what you say and how you say it but also through what you do. A message of “we care” won't be credible if, for example, anyone dealing with the public is cold and seemingly uncaring.

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#### COMMUNICATIONS TIPS

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- **Start at the end** – Don't write ANYTHING – not one word – until you're clear about what you want the piece to accomplish. Start with results and you'll end with success.
- **Tell stories** – As children, we loved being told stories. Guess what? As adults, we still love stories. So, wherever and whenever possible, deliver your information in the form of a story with an interesting and captivating beginning, a meaty middle, and a strong ending.
- **Use repetition and consistency** – Very few in your audience actually hear your message the first time. Therefore, you need to repeat it repeatedly using the same or similar language.
- **Speak to your audience's self-interest** – In other words, identify and use an audience benefit that answers the question: What's in it for me? Relate to your audience's values, talk their language, and meet their needs.

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#### FOLLOW THE FOUR C'S

Your writing must be clear, concise, correct, and complete. That means you do not use internal jargon or abbreviations when you are communicating with the public. For example, you may know

that Br stands for branch, but the public probably won't. Also, consider whether to use the 24-hour clock when communicating to external non-military audiences. For example, use 7 p.m. – not 19:00.

## EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

When using your own or a Legion email (general or PR) to communicate with others on Legion business, it is important to be professional at all times. Messages must be clear as well as correct – factually and grammatically.

### PROFESSIONAL EMAIL ÉTIQUETTE

**Return emails promptly.** If someone is asking for information, get back to her/him ASAP. If it will take time to assemble the information, send a brief message to advise of that. If someone gives you information you needed, send a quick thank-you message.

**Do not send anything that could offend people.** If in doubt, remember this simple rule of thumb: don't email anything you wouldn't put on a postcard.

**Do not write in all upper case.** WHEN YOU USE ALL CAPS, YOU SEEM TO BE SHOUTING. This can be very annoying.

**Think before you react.** Don't vent anger or frustration in an email. This could reflect badly on you as well as on the Legion as a whole.

**Send emails only to those who need the information.** It's easy to send messages through a mailing list, but you'll be cluttering up the mailboxes of those who aren't interested in it. In addition, if your list shows everyone's address, you could be getting into a privacy issue if even one of them doesn't want his/her address made public, **TIP:** Use the bcc field instead of cc to ensure each recipient's privacy .

**Don't hit reply all when acknowledging a social or similar email.** e.g. retirement message, attendance at an event. Once again, this clutters up mailboxes for no reason.

# Earned media opportunities – an overview

As a PRO, you will reach audiences via your own communication channels such as your website, social media, and newsletters (owned media). If you can afford it, you may even pay to have a third party deliver it (paid media), but for most, the goal is to earn media coverage – information about your branch given voluntarily and freely by others on channels you don't "own".

## NEWS MEDIA

*If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?*

Simply getting a story in the news media is not the ultimate goal. Having people hear it or read it and then do something about it – change their opinion, talk about it (word of mouth), attend an event, donate money – is what it's all about.

On any given day, thousands of stories compete for space or time in the news media. Each day, new products are introduced, government bills pass through various stages, scientific discoveries are made, babies or puppies are rescued from danger, teams play games, and prominent folks say things that are either incredibly profound or profoundly stupid.

How do media decision makers choose the stories they will use? Generally, they evaluate the information based on its newsworthiness, and on the resources available to cover it. The factors that help determine the newsworthiness of events and situations are:

**Impact** – Information about events/situations that are likely to affect many people.

**Timeliness** – Information about events/situations that is appropriate to the audience at the time it is printed or aired. A major anniversary also can make information timely as can seasonableness.

**Prominence** – Information about events/situations involving well-known persons or institutions.

**Proximity** – Information on events/situations occurring in the area covered by a particular medium or that hit “close to home” geographically or psychologically.

**Human interest** – Information on events/situations that often touch emotions. Stories about people.

**Unusualness** – Information on events/situations that deviate sharply from the expected or the ordinary.

**Interest** – Information about events/situations that are likely to interest many people.

**TIP:** – Television, and to a lesser extent, newspapers, often add value to stories that offer a clear and interesting visual element that can be used to enhance the story and appeal to their audiences.

## **NEWS TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

When you deliver information to the media, you can choose from several tools and techniques. Some examples include:

**News release** – A news recap written about something new and released to the news media.

**Media interview** – An organizational spokesperson is interviewed by a reporter at the request of either the organization or the reporter.

**News conference** – A media event organized by someone who wishes to make an announcement directly to the news media. News conferences usually are called to provide reporters with details on spot news. Media kits containing background information are often given to reporters who attend the news conference.

**Photo opportunity** – Providing an opportunity for the media to obtain a photograph(s) or videotape footage of a newsworthy person/people and/or an interesting happening.

**Publicity stunt** – An interesting or unusual “event” created strictly as a publicity vehicle. It has sufficient human interest or unusualness to make photo and/or story material newsworthy for publication or broadcast.

**News story pitches** – Approaching editors, producers, news directors, or reporters and trying to interest them in writing, covering, or airing a possible story, covering an event, or doing an interview. While many pitches are crafted to appeal to the needs of a specific media representative, each may be accompanied by more general information such as a news release or fact sheet. A media advisory – a written “invitation” to a news conference or other newsworthy event – is the tool used most often for event pitches. (See sample advisory.) The pitch can be made by telephone, in person or via email.

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## COMMON NEWS TOOLS

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These materials are designed to accompany various publicity materials as back up and/or to provide more information.

**Backgrounder** – A document that contains background information on a person, organization, issue, etc. A backgrounder provides more extensive information than is generally included in stand-alone publicity materials such as news releases.

**Biography (Bio)** – A brief account of a person’s life or a portion of that person’s life. The document may also be called a profile.

**Fact sheet** – A short document that provides information, usually in point form. Fact sheets provide details on an organization or event.

**Media kit** – A package, consisting of a news release and supporting documents, usually bundled together in a two-pocket folder with the release on the right and supporting documents on the left.

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## COMMUNITY SERVICE & OP-ED COVERAGE

PROs also can take advantage of the opportunities many media offer to organizations based on community service or commentary/opinion. The following are three of the most popular options.

**Community notice** – A brief description (who, what, when, where, and perhaps why) of a community event, need, etc., listed free in a special section – sometimes in a calendar – of a newspaper or periodical.



**Public service announcement (PSA)** – A broadcast announcement, for which no charge is made, that promotes the programs, activities, or services of governments (nonpartisan), nonprofit organizations, or other groups serving community interests.

**Letter to the editor** – A letter written for and sent to a newspaper or magazine to present an organization's position, make a correction, or respond to another story or letter.

## OTHER EARNED MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

**Media participation** – Obtaining the support of a particular media outlet or outlets with an event or cause. This could involve promos, prizes, ticket giveaways, or a range of celebrity activities.

**Online community event sites** – Compilations of information on events taking place in a specific community. There is no charge to have your event listed. Examples include:

*The Community Information Centre of Ottawa:* <http://www.cominfo-ottawa.org/bulletin.html#PostingCriteria>

*Moncton event calendar:* [http://www.moncton.ca/Residents/Events/Events\\_Calendar.htm](http://www.moncton.ca/Residents/Events/Events_Calendar.htm)

*Calgary Pulse events calendar* – <http://www.visitcalgary.com/things-to-do/events-calendar>

**TIP:** To find a relevant online calendar or calendars, Google your city name + event listings

You also can submit your information to other sites with event listings such as your:

- zone
- local business improvement association
- local community centre

**TIP:** How-to information on tools and techniques introduced here are available in sections 8, 9 and 10.

# Get to know your local media

## LOCAL PRINT MEDIA

Local print media includes periodicals such as magazines, daily newspapers, community newspapers (often published for specific neighbourhoods), and special interest newspapers for such audiences as businesspeople, students, and particular ethnic groups.

It's important to understand how these outlets operate, including what they find newsworthy and what their deadlines are. You also should be familiar with the reporters, editors, columnists and others who make decisions about what information to use. The difference between getting good coverage, no coverage, and bad coverage may be influenced by the extent of your knowledge of the newspaper.

## WHO'S WHO IN DAILY NEWSPAPERS

Whenever possible to know local editors and reporters, particularly beat reporters. Below are some of the people you may want to approach:

**Assignment editor** – Assigns reporters to cover stories.

**City editor** – The director of the newspaper's local news operation.

**Beat editors** (entertainment, military, sports, etc.) – are in charge of specific sections or departments.

**Letters editor** – The person responsible for selecting and editing letters to the editor and possibly commentaries.

## WHO'S WHO IN COMMUNITY AND SPECIAL INTEREST NEWSPAPERS

Community and special interest newspapers vary widely in newspaper size and staff size. Some may be only a few pages long and have a staff of one or possibly two. Others can run 50 or more pages and employ 10 or more people. Before you send anything out, check the specific newspaper to determine its size and scope, and if you wish to proceed, here's who to approach.

**Editor** – All community and special interest newspapers have an editor who is responsible for the overall newspaper. He/she sets the tone for the news content of the newspaper, from editorials to news stories. When there is sufficient staff, the editor also assigns reporters to cover stories.

**Letters editor** – The person responsible for selecting and editing letters to the editor

**Specific reporters** – Some regular reporters may have beats and you might approach the appropriate reporter for your topic.

## WHO'S WHO IN PERIODICALS

The editor or editor in chief (larger publications) is responsible for all non-advertising content. She/he decides what kinds of materials to publish and arranges to obtain that material. The assistant editor screens freelance materials, works with staff and freelance writers, thinks of story ideas, and edits material chosen for publication.

## LOCAL BROADCAST MEDIA

Local broadcast media includes private and public radio and television stations. Many communities also have a cable company that may or may not provide publicity opportunities.

## WHO'S WHO IN RADIO & TELEVISION

*(Note that there can be variation in the job titles below)*

**News director** – The person in charge of the newsroom. Along with directing all news operations, in smaller centres, he or she may also do newscasts.

**Assignment editor** – The person who assigns reporters and, for TV, camera crews to cover news stories.

**Reporter** – The person whose main responsibility is to come up with story ideas and tell them.

**Producer** – The person often in charge of determining what makes it into the news broadcast and where it's positioned. Often the host is also the producer or co-producer.

**PSA administrator**--The person who reads, selects or rejects, and processes material submitted as public service announcements. Most radio PSAs are read live. Some stations

accept pre-taped announcements. Some also put community information, especially about nonprofit events, on their websites.

**Promotion director** – He/she handles all station promotions. Duties may include buying advertising from other media, writing promos to run on the station, arranging for DJ appearances at community events, handling inquiries for prizes, arranging the station presence at community and special events, creating contests, PSAs, and arranging for giveaways.

**Talk show/call-in hosts** - They comment on a variety of topics, issues, etc. Some include listener telephone calls and/or outside guests.

# Writing for the news media

Information that is chosen for a news story and the news style of writing share several characteristics, including accuracy, currency, clarity, and brevity. If you want to have your news published or aired, you must keep this in mind.

## **ACCURACY**

For a story to be accurate, everything in it including names, dates, addresses and every word, phrase or sentence, must be verifiably correct. In addition, the overall impression conveyed by facts and quotes must be accurate as well.

## **CURRENCY**

The very word news means that information used is current. Because news audiences want the latest information, most stories emphasize that the event or situation happened or is unfolding today. Less preferable but accepted is to report on what happened *yesterday*. A particular story may also be followed for several days depending upon context and interest level.

## **BREVITY**

News stories are not novels. The news is designed to be read by busy consumers, and most of them prefer a Dragnet approach of “just the facts ma’am.” Brevity also is necessary because most news holes are small.

## **CONCISENESS AND CLARITY**

Materials prepared for news outlets should be written as concisely as possible, avoiding irrelevant facts, redundancy, and wordiness. The information and the writing style must be so simple and clear that anyone can understand it.

## GENERAL TIPS FOR WRITING FOR THE NEWS MEDIA

- Use short paragraphs and sentences.
- Use the present tense wherever possible. The past tense may give the impression that the information is not timely.
- Use simple language.
- Write a strong lead.
- Use quotes if possible – but remember, they can be the first things to go when the editor starts cutting. Make yours so good that they'll survive the cut.
- Follow proper style guidelines found in *The Canadian Press Stylebook* or *The Elements of Style* by Strunk & White.)

## WRITING QUOTATIONS

The only way to express opinions or make value judgments in a news release is to use quotes. In addition, while a reporter or editor may rewrite a release – in part or in its entirety – any quotes that escape the editing pencil will be used verbatim.

Try not to waste the quote on factual information that can go in the body of a release. For example, there's no need to have the president say that the event will be held on Oct. 20. Remember, if a quote is sufficiently appealing to the journalist, it will be used as-is. What a great way to get your key message across to media audiences.

**TIP:** When attributing a fact, judgment or quotation use the verb/tense "says" or "said." If it's a quote is from someone at your branch, include the person's name and title in the attribution.

## CREATING AND USING BOILERPLATES

A boilerplate is a paragraph with basic background information about the organization that can be used repeatedly in media materials. It often is a "stock" paragraph that identifies the organization and the products it makes or the services it provides. It is written in the third person and is brief.

## **Example: Royal Canadian Legion boilerplate**

### **About The Royal Canadian Legion**

Founded in 1925, the Legion is Canada's largest Veteran support and community service organization. We are a non-profit organization with a national reach across Canada as well as branches in the U.S., Europe and Mexico. With more than 275,000 members, many of whom volunteer an extraordinary amount of time to their branches, our strength is in our numbers.

Public Relations / Media Inquiries: [PublicRelations@Legion.ca](mailto:PublicRelations@Legion.ca) / 343-540-7604 - Nujma Bond

[Legion.ca](http://Legion.ca)

[Facebook.com/CanadianLegion](https://Facebook.com/CanadianLegion)

[Twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion](https://Twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion)

[Instagram.com/royalcanadianlegion](https://Instagram.com/royalcanadianlegion)

[youtube.com/user/RCLDominionCommand](https://youtube.com/user/RCLDominionCommand)

#### **GENERAL WRITING TIP:**

Make sure all the information in the materials you send to the news media is accurate. If you write a quote for someone else, make sure that person approves it

Keep your sentences short and make sure each focuses on one main point.

Do not use flowery adjectives or adverbs outside of the quotes.

Use transitions between paragraphs to create a sense of flow. Vary the number of words in each sentence to create a rhythm.

To make the news, you have to get past the editor or news director. She/he decides what will run (or won't) based on the story's importance and audience interest in that story. These professionals are not there to correct your spelling, fix your grammar, improve your style, or chase you for missing information. PR pro Dan McIver APR sums it up nicely: "If an editor doesn't like your stuff, you lose."

## **WRITING HEADLINES**

**TIP:** Keep headlines brief. Depending on the length of each word, you're generally looking at three to eight words, excluding articles such as a, an and the. Use the active voice and the present tense. Get rid of space-eating words such as "There is" and unnecessary prepositions.

Examples of headlines include:

**Wear a poppy to Remember**  
**The spirit of Invictus lives on**  
**The Legion taps Whitewater for a brand new Canadian brew**

## **WRITING LEAD PARAGRAPHS**

The lead – the first paragraph in a release – must grab the attention of the news outlet's gatekeeper. It may do that by focusing on the most important point in the story or it may be designed to interest the gatekeeper. Most follow the S–V–O construction, i.e., subject – verb – object.

*Example:*

Each year, tens of millions of Canadians (S) from coast to coast to coast wear (V) a Poppy (O) to honour, and Remember Canada's fallen Veterans and to support those who served and continue to serve today.



# Preparing news materials

## NEWS RELEASES

Before you begin to gather information for your release or consider the angle you'd like to use, ask yourself a very important question:

### Who cares?

**If the answer is “I do, and so do the people at my branch,” stop right there. If the story you want to tell is of little or no interest to those outside your branch, it will be of little or no interest to news media outlets and their audiences.**

It can be difficult enough to get a completely newsworthy story published or aired, so trying to get one published that isn't, is next to impossible. The gatekeeper may also wonder about your grasp of the concept of news and be less receptive to other stories that originate with you.

## ANGLES

The angle is the hook or hooks on which your story hangs. The main angle may not be the most important point in a release, but it usually is the most compelling. Because your release must have news value, there must be at least one (and usually more than one) angle that shares new and intriguing information, for it to be considered newsworthy.

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### FINDING ANGLES

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To help organize your information and find your angle, answer the following questions.

- [ ] Is the information timely? Is it happening now or is it an anniversary of something that happened in the past? Is it information the media audience needs now to ensure or prevent something from happening in the future? Does it provide information on something many people are talking about?

- [ ] Does it have proximity, i.e., appeal geographically or to the special interests of the readers/views/listeners of specific media? Is it something happening in the community where the newspaper is published or the TV station operates? Is it of interest to listeners of a country music or rock radio station?
  - [ ] Does or will it have a clear or not-so-clear impact on a large number of people? Will it affect their lives?
  - [ ] Does it have human interest – something that will appeal to their emotions? Will it make them smile, cry, get angry, sympathize, empathize, or criticize? Will it inspire them?
  - [ ] Does it involve a prominent person or institution?
  - [ ] Is there something unusual about it?
  - [ ] Is it an interesting update on a previous version of the same story?
- 

## NEWS RELEASE STRUCTURE

Overall, the news release structure emulates the news story structure. The most basic is:

- **Lead** (*opening paragraph*) – new information succinctly shared)
- **Explanation/amplification** (*middle paragraphs*) – background and other information
- **Closing** (*final paragraph*) – added detail that is not critical to the understanding of the release

Most often, you will use the inverted pyramid style of story construction where information is presented in descending order of importance to the potential reader. With the inverted pyramid, the most important fact comes first. It's followed by the second most important fact, the third most important, etc. This structure helps journalists edit your release without cutting out the main points of the story.

## NEWS RELEASE ELEMENTS

### 1. ***Date sent and release date***

Include the date the release is being sent. The most common release date – the date the sender wishes the media to use it – is normally placed after the city of release at the beginning

of the first paragraph. If the release is ready for immediate distribution, the phrase to use at the top of the release page – is “For Immediate Release.” If the release is embargoed, give the date (and time) when the media can use it. E.g., FOR RELEASE Oct. 29.

**2. *Headline***

The headline should grab the editor’s attention and briefly give him/her an idea of what the story is all about. Note that your headline probably won’t be used, but if it grabs the editor, it has done its job.

**3. *News summary***

When sending by email, summarize the news values and visual highlights in your email, and attach the actual release or a link to it if applicable.

**4. *Lead paragraph***

The lead is designed to draw the editor’s attention to the release. It might be a synopsis of the key points or include an interesting, creative, and relevant quote or fact. The latter may focus on the human element of the story.

**5. *News release body***

Depending on the format you are using, the release itself could be a few paragraphs with the key information, usually in the inverted pyramid style. Another option, especially for email delivery, is to present the info in bulleted point form.

**6. *Boilerplate (optional)***

It’s a good idea to provide basic background information about the Legion and your branch in the final paragraph. A boilerplate – a prepared text used repeatedly – helps create a consistent message and stay true to the brand.

**7. *Contact information.***

At the end, add the contact name, email address and phone number(s). If there’s more information on your website, include its URL.

## **8. Visual elements**

If it makes sense, add a link to a photo, graphic, video, or other visual element to complement your release. e.g. a photo from a successful fundraising event in your community. Visuals can increase the pick-up interest in a release.

### **SPECIAL TIPS FOR RADIO NEWS RELEASES**

- Do not send a copy of the news release you prepared for print. Rewrite it for the spoken word.
- Keep it short. Your news release should be 15 to 45 seconds long.
- Use short sentences. Average about 10 words per sentence.
- Carefully choose your words. Use simple, but not simplistic, words. Never use a long word when a short word works as well. Avoid using abstractions. Choose words that make ideas easier to understand and remember. In addition, make sure words evoke tangible images.
- Phoneticize hard-to-pronounce names.
- Provide any information on sound opportunities.
- At the bottom of the release, provide the name of a spokesperson, expert, or participant who can do an interview.

## **GETTING THE RELEASE TO THE MEDIA**

### **WHO**

Do not send a copy of the same release to different editors at the same newspaper unless you make each aware that the other has it.

If you are preparing a release especially for one newspaper, let the editor that you're offering her/him an exclusive. If you're localizing a release for each community newspaper, or if you're giving each paper exclusive use of a particular photo, make sure they're aware of this as well.

**TIP:** When you localize a release for a community newspaper, quoting a neighbourhood resident or referring to a neighbourhood institution, highlight that part of the release so it really stands out.

## WHEN

Plan to send your release to the daily newspaper about one to five days before you expect and want to have it published. (The more important the news, the less lead time necessary.) If you know when the news will be available, i.e., you're expecting results from your fundraiser on Friday, you can tell the editor when you expect to deliver it to him or her.

Be aware that long weekends can offer great publicity advantages. For example, at some newspapers, a holiday Monday paper must be just about ready to go by 5 p.m. on the previous Friday. That means that three newspapers (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday) must be close to being completed by then. This is a great opportunity for a publicist with a soft news story that has less news value but an interesting angle.

For community newspapers, allow one to two weeks, sometimes longer – depending on the importance of the news and the newspapers' publishing frequencies and deadlines. Business publications and consumer magazines that are published monthly require a couple or few months' lead time.

If you're emailing the release to a number of reporters, use the 'bcc' field – not 'cc.'

## WHY SOME RELEASES DON'T MAKE IT

Garbage cans and trash files in the newsrooms of the nation fill up every day with news releases no one wants to use. Some of the reasons for a release's quick demise include:

- It contains no newsworthy information.
- It's newsworthy but not to that publication or its readers and/or not at the time it arrives.
- It's an obvious ploy for free advertising.
- It loses out to the competition — at any stage.
- The sender missed the deadline.

Even if your release is well written, newsworthy, has a delicious angle and fabulous quotes, and is appropriate to the media to which you sent it, it may still not be used. Why? There are many possible reasons such as: the editor simply may not be in the mood for it, there are too many other higher priority choices, there is no space left in the day’s paper or broadcast, or there aren’t enough resources to cover it. Better luck next time hopefully.

**Sample Legion release** (<http://www.legion.ca/news/2017/08/23/royal-canadian-legion-branches-across-canada-host-invictus-games-national-flag-tour>)

## OTHER WAYS TO EARN NEWS COVERAGE

### SPECIAL EVENT COVERAGE PITCH

The PR practitioner often “calls” on the media to cover a special event. Note that there is a difference between a special event and a media event. A special event is for specific public attendees and is designed to meet specific objectives that may or may not include media coverage. A media event, on the other hand, is an event designed with the main objective of obtaining media coverage. Members of your public may be on hand, but the purpose is to get a photo or story in the mass media.

When pitching event coverage, include details on photo and interview opportunities as well as potential news angles, from celebrity participation to the size or scope of the event.

In your media advisory, relate the event audience to the media’s audience.

MEDIA	WHO TO PITCH
Newspaper, TV	Assignment editor
Radio	News director

### THE MEDIA ADVISORY

This is the document that advises the media of an event you would like covered or a story or photo opportunity. It should pique interest with an explanatory or tantalizing headline and an opening paragraph that clearly presents the news values.

The media advisory must be a fast read – one page, short words, few and short sentences, point form, and bullets. It should include information on potential interviews and photo

ops at the event, and provide clear information on where the reporter can go for information and assistance. Try to answer editors' and reporters' questions in advance by supplying all necessary details on parking, security, power outlets, etc.

In general, send the advisory a few working days before the event. Some media, such as community papers, like even more advance notice and you may wish to provide more notice if the event will require an outlet to consider special resources. Provide media kits for reporters at the event (physical and/or digital). *Sample media advisory [here](#).*

### TELEPHONE PITCH

When you make a telephone pitch, clearly give the angle and explain why viewers, readers, and/or listeners would be interested. If there's a distinct benefit to the community, say so. Follow up with written materials, including a media advisory.

While a phone pitch to an editor or reporter may be over in a minute or less, it could have taken an hour or more to get ready for it. Journalists are very busy and are not into chatting for long on the phone, so you have very little time to sell him or her on your story. That means you must become be able to make a 30-second pitch. In point form, write down your key message points. Practice selling them, and time yourself doing it.

Here are some tips for when you call.

- Briefly explain who you are and why you're calling.
- Make sure the reporter has time to listen to your pitch. If not, ask when you can call back.
- In a sentence or two, explain why readers or viewers would be interested. Think news angles.

# Media interviews

## PRINT NEWS INTERVIEW

### MEDIA

Newspaper

### WHO TO PITCH

Beat reporter, department editor, city editor

## BROADCAST NEWS INTERVIEW

### MEDIA

TV

Radio

### WHO TO PITCH

News director  
Assignment editor

News director

**Support your spokesperson by providing talking points and insight on the reporter who will conduct the interview. Make sure these talking points are true to the Legion brand and that they convey clear and correct information about the Legion. (See Legion messaging)**

## PREPARING FOR POTENTIAL INTERVIEW PROBLEMS

One of the best ways to prepare – or to prepare your spokesperson – for a potentially hostile interview is to ask: “So, what questions are you worried about, and how are you going to answer them when they come up?”

Pose those questions to your spokesperson until he/she is comfortable with her/his answers. *In addition, deal in advance with questions you or your spokesperson cannot or should not answer.* If, for example, you do not know the answer. Say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out and get back to you right away.”

What if you don’t understand the question? Solution: Ask the reporter for clarification. Never take a stab at it. In addition, what if an answer calls for speculation? Solution: “I don’t want to speculate.”



## MORE MEDIA INTERVIEW TIPS

- If you don't want to be quoted - don't say it.
- Be brief and to the point.
- When doing a broadcast interview, pause before answering a question. It allows you to consider your words carefully, and tells the audience you are giving the question serious consideration.
- Do not use obscure acronyms and jargon the public won't understand.
- Don't offer personal opinions while wearing your Legion hat. Be apolitical.
- Don't just say "no comment." Explain why you can't comment.
- Consider your body language. It can confirm or contradict what you are saying.
- Don't be forced into "yes" or "no" answers to complex or loaded questions.
- Don't let an interviewer throw you with silence.
- Don't lose your cool. Be pleasant even if the reporter isn't.
- Remember: the questions don't do damage, only the answers do."

**The person being interviewed has no control over what is published or aired, nor should he/she ask to approve an interview story before it is published or aired. However, be prepared to follow up with a news outlet if their story is inaccurate or you are misquoted. It shows you are paying attention and outlets will sometimes make corrections, especially if the piece is found online.**

# Going beyond the newsroom

This section contains information, tips and guidelines for the PRO who would like to explore and consider different ways to earn media and other coverage.

Although the news release is the workhorse of many publicity efforts, sometimes the information the PRO would like publicized can better be delivered another way. For example, you can take advantage of the free opportunities many media offer to organizations based on community service, commentary/opinion or the media's marketing plans.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE & OP-ED COVERAGE**

### **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Many publications have sections where they print letters from individual citizens as well as those representing specific organizations. Your letter can focus on correcting information that was printed in the publication or respond to another story or letter. A significant advantage of the letter to the editor is that while it may be edited for length or style, the message is unfiltered.

If you put together an effective, interesting, and concise letter that follows the publication's guidelines, it may be published in its entirety. Check the media website for criteria such as deadline and maximum length.

#### **Format**

The following is one format you can use when writing a letter to the editor.

- Graph one - why you are writing
- Graph two - brief background material
- Graph three - your opinion
- Graph four - what you want readers/media to think or do

## **Style and content**

State the purpose of your letter at the very beginning. If you're responding to a particular story or another letter to the editor, cite the page, date, and article/story head in the first paragraph. Keep the tone professional. Letters to the editor can be positive, negative, or neutral in their tone and contents, but they also should be temperate and factual. Don't stoop to name calling.

The letters are short (average three or four paragraphs) and concise (one main idea per letter, one point per sentence). Choose your main points and provide facts that support each. At the end of the letter provide a pointer – the lasting impression you want the reader to have.

Letters must be signed with your full name and include your address and phone number for verification. Identify yourself as the branch PRO.

## **CALL-IN SHOWS**

On a call-in broadcast program, a host encourages the audience to call in and comment on the issue of the day. If you decide to call in, make sure that what you want to say is relevant to the conversation. In addition, be forewarned: some hosts are very opinionated and will not hesitate to say what is on their minds whether it is favourable to you or the Legion. Carefully check out the program before you call.

## **COMMUNITY NOTICES**

Non-profit and community groups can submit community notices – short messages on nonprofit organizations' activities, events, and/or needs – to print media. Most publications print them free of charge, and all have specific criteria you must follow, including length and deadlines. The information printed may include notices of public meetings, special events, volunteer opportunities, fundraisers, and sporting and recreational events.

Each notice includes a brief description (who, what, when, where, and sometimes, why) and it's listed in a special section – often a calendar – in the print and/or online edition of the newspaper or periodical on the publication's website. Note that some media allow you submit your notice for calendars that appear only on their online sites.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Public service announcements (PSAs) are messages that promote the programs, activities, or services of charitable, civic, or other nonprofit groups serving community or public interests. They are aired on radio or TV at no charge to the organization.

Information for PSAs can be submitted in point form, as a script, or pre-recorded. Because PSAs do not generate revenue for the station (and you're competing for airtime with many, many other nonprofits), the easier you can make it for them to get your message aired, the higher your chances of having the material used. That's one reason why most PSAs are submitted as scripts written to 10, 15, or 30 seconds.

Some guidelines for scripted PSAs include: one PSA per sheet, use a heading, and put airdates at the top. In addition, don't assume that the radio station will broadcast your PSA exactly as it was written. Sometimes a 30-second PSA is edited down to 10 seconds or less. It also may be edited to be part of a broadcast community calendar – brief mentions of community events and needs grouped together under a specific day, date, or theme. This information also may be posted on the station's website.

Radio stations are flooded with so many requests for free airtime that there isn't enough time to air them all. Many also do not meet the station's criteria, which can include:

- must appeal to the majority of the audience
- must be an important issue to the community
- “fits” with station format and agenda
- comes from a reputable submitting organization
- contains low or no level of controversy
- meets standards of good taste
- includes a creative message – interesting to listeners

Many local radio stations have community news or info sections on their websites as well as submission details and criteria. TV stations also may air your public service announcement or post it on the station website. Check the particular station for more information.

## OTHER EARNED MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

### MEDIA PARTICIPATION

This involves obtaining the support of a particular media outlet or outlets with your event or cause. The support could be in the form of promos, prizes, ticket giveaways, or a range of celebrity activities. Any decision based on whether or not to support your branch often is guided more by their own marketing needs than by altruism.

Keep this in mind because one key to successfully pitching media participation in your event is to clearly point out how it appeals to the media audience. Other selling points include the chance to attract new readers, listeners, viewers, or advertisers, the credibility of the Legion and/or event, and the compatibility of the event with the station format.

If it appeals to their audience, a radio or TV station may even sponsor an event. Although most do not pay sponsorship fees, some do promos and on-air mentions of the event for days or even weeks in advance.

A radio station may send someone to emcee, participate in another way, and/or supply station-branded items as prizes. Note however if one media outlet goes so far as to lend its name to your event, it may be difficult – if not impossible – to persuade its competitors to participate as well.

Media participation often involves a quid pro quo where you agree to mention the station in some or all of your publicity, promotional, and advertising materials, allow it to put up a banner at the event, list the station in your event program, or provide free space in it for a station ad. Specific terms may be spelled out in a contract.

Note that the media will not necessarily promote or sponsor your event just because it is worthy. They must be convinced that their involvement will also pay off in greater public exposure, increased audience, and improved market position.

#### MEDIA

#### WHO TO PITCH

Radio, TV	Promotion director, program director, DJ, news director
Newspaper	Promotion or community relations department

## **TAKE PART IN RADIO PROGRAMS**

Radio hosts make every effort to make their shows lively and unique. Some conduct on-the-air contests and promotions, give away tickets and other prizes, and discuss upcoming local events. After listening to a program for a while, you may be able to come up with creative items to provide as prizes and/or pitch ideas that liven up the show.

Also, consider providing something such as a pair of tickets or interesting Legion branded item that a radio host can give away as a prize. Pitch your ideas to the host, producer or the promotion director.

## **POST INFORMATION ON ONLINE EVENT SITES**

To expand community knowledge of your event, consider listing it on an online event site so those searching for things to do in the community can find your event on the site. Some of them also tweet information about the popular events listed.

There is no charge for this, but do check out the sites' posting criteria before you register your branch. Once you choose a user name and password, you can log in at any time to submit your information. Also note that many of these sites have administrators who decide whether or not your information will be used, so allow a bit of time to go through this process.

# Holding media events

A media event is one that is held specifically and mostly exclusively for the news media. If any members of the public are there, they usually serve mostly as human props that make for good photo ops.

## TYPES OF MEDIA EVENTS

### NEWS CONFERENCES

From a logistics point of view, a news conference can eliminate the time-consuming task of packaging and disseminating information to the media on a one-by-one basis. However, there's no guarantee you'll receive the amount and quality of coverage you desire. A small number of reporters may show up, resulting in very little space or time. On the other hand, many reporters may attend but you still may not receive much coverage since your story was preempted by a larger or more important one. Also be aware that news conferences do not always generate the type of coverage you may want. In addition, with shrinking media workforces, fewer resources are being dispatched to physically attend a news conference unless it's deemed to be particularly serious/newsworthy or interestingly entertaining. The latter items are also unfortunately the first items to be cut from a publication or broadcast if they're short of space or time.

### PHOTO OPS

Photo ops often revolve around people doing something important or interesting. Try to avoid clichés – such as standard ribbon cuttings or big cheque presentations – unless you can put a creative spin on it.

You can do a telephone pitch, but be sure to follow up with a media advisory that includes logistical information and news angles as well as any supplementary materials, from fact sheets to bios.

#### MEDIA

Daily newspaper, TV

#### WHO TO PITCH

Assignment editor

## MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Arranging a media availability means working with spokespeople to ensure they are prepared to be interrupted by media on a certain date(s), at a certain time(s), and, perhaps, at a specific location. Reporters are then informed of the spokesperson's availability and invited to visit or phone.

MEDIA	WHO TO PITCH
Newspaper	Assignment editor, department editor, city editor
Radio	News director
TV	News director, assignment editor

## PLANNING THE MEDIA EVENT

### • Day, date, and time

In general, late morning or early afternoon is good for most media. Avoid Saturdays and Sundays as well as major holidays when most media operate with skeleton staffs. Also avoid after 5 p.m. because most daily deadlines have passed and most media are unionized and prefer not having to pay overtime to cover an evening story unless it is deemed necessary.

### • Location selection, preparation, and set-up

Prepare a room set-up diagram that shows where everything will be placed. This may include a podium, microphone, chairs, a refreshment table, and a media table for kits and other information.

### • Briefing the spokesperson

If your spokesperson is not adequately prepared, or does not have experience fielding questions from reporters, your event can fall apart. It's often up to the PRO to brief the spokesperson. Begin by preparing a talking points and potential questions and suggested answers.

### • Staffing

Make a list of volunteers needed to staff the event, including those at the door.

### • Inviting the media

If you send a media advisory to both print and broadcast reporters which you will in most cases, – set up the room to accommodate both. TV reporters, with their lights, cameras,



and microphones, tend to take up a lot of space. Make an extra effort to accommodate the needs of print reporters too.

Whom do you invite to a media event? Outline the nature of the news in your media advisory then leave the decision to them. (To help with their decision-making, you may also want to include a line about the sorts of visuals to expect at your event).

### • **Implementation and follow-up**

Start the event at the scheduled time and give out your media kit – a package, often in a folder, that contains one or more of the following:

- a master news release
- bios on event participants and other key players
- one or more backgrounders
- one or more fact sheets

Know when to end the event. Don't cut off reporters while they still have questions, but don't let the Q&A session drag on. Send kits to those who could not attend and/or offer them phone interviews.



**National Remembrance Day Ceremony 2017**

***Ceremony at the National War Memorial in Ottawa***

**WHAT:** The Royal Canadian Legion presents the National Remembrance Day Ceremony

**WHEN:** **Saturday, November 11, activity begins at 10:00 am, official commemoration begins at 10:55 a.m.**

**Please see schedule at [Legion.ca](http://Legion.ca)**

**Media kit available by e-mailing [PublicRelations@Legion.ca](mailto:PublicRelations@Legion.ca)**

**WHERE:** National War Memorial, Ottawa

***Also watch livestreaming of the event on Facebook live at: <https://www.facebook.com/CanadianLegion/>***

**About The Royal Canadian Legion**

Founded in 1925, the Legion is Canada's largest Veteran support and community service organization. We are a non-profit organization with a national reach across Canada as well as branches in the U.S., Europe and Mexico. With more than 275,000 members, many of whom volunteer an extraordinary amount of time to their branches, our strength is in our numbers.

Public Relations / Media Inquiries: [PublicRelations@Legion.ca](mailto:PublicRelations@Legion.ca)  
[Legion.ca](http://Legion.ca)

[Facebook.com/CanadianLegion](https://Facebook.com/CanadianLegion)

[Twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion](https://Twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion)

[Instagram.com/royalcanadianlegion](https://Instagram.com/royalcanadianlegion)

[youtube.com/user/RCLDominionCommand](https://youtube.com/user/RCLDominionCommand)

## SETTING UP A NEWS CONFERENCE – CHECKLIST

### [ ] Preliminaries

- Make a complete list of media to be invited
- Prepare media advisory
- Meet with spokesperson/spokespeople
- Prepare a briefing book, if necessary
- Notify staff, including receptionist as appropriate

### [ ] Logistics

- Select location (could also be off-site)
- Check room/location:
  - size
  - accessibility
  - acoustics
  - PA system (if needed)
  - electrical outlets
  - parking
  - telephone
  - lighting
- plug-in audio board for broadcast media
- Book room
- Prepare diagram of room
- head table
- seating
- coat rack
- check-in area
- Select refreshments (if necessary)
  - coffee/tea
  - juice
  - other
- Arrange for staff
- coat check
- guides/greeters
- runners

### [ ] Equipment/supplies

- stationery (pencils, pens, paper)
- coat rack
- podium
- easel
- projector
- tape recorder/video camera

### [ ] Notify media

- send media advisory
- Post advisory on your website
- pitch to media
- make follow-up calls

### [ ] Brief spokesperson/spokespeople

- Advise on media attending/invited
- Determine if other "expert" input needed
- Go over prepared statement
- Hold practice session with prepared Q&As

### [ ] Arrange for internal coverage

- stenographer
- audiotape
- photographer
- video tape

### [ ] Prepare media kits

- basic news release
- copy of prepared statement
- fact sheet and/or backgrounder
- bio/bios
- copies of relevant documents
- photo(s)

### [ ] Set up room

- test microphone
- cover mirrors
- turn off canned music
- arrange tables, chairs, etc.
- set out cups, glasses, etc.
- set up check-in area
- arrange coat check
- put up banner, logo, signage, etc.

### [ ] Hold conference

- give out kits
- set ground rules
- introduce spokesperson
- set up Q&A session
- make formal close
- arrange special interviews

### [ ] Follow-Up

- send information to media not in attendance
- offer telephone interview(s)
- transcribe any tapes
- monitor media coverage
- send clippings/transcripts to executives

# Media relations guidelines

As a PRO, you can establish and maintain a professional working relationship with news gatherers and gatekeepers, in part by becoming known as a credible source and a provider of factual, expert information whether or not that information results in media coverage

If you're interested in doing that, here's how.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **1. *Be honest and upfront***

When you attempt to communicate with your publics through the mass media, be aware that the key to effective media relations is to be a reliable source with a track record for accuracy, integrity and performance.

#### **Don't lie, evade or mislead**

Don't evade questions or attempt to mislead reporters, not only because this is dishonest, but also because doing so can make reporters question everything you say. Most do research before they approach you for information, so any lie or omission probably will be caught. Most also are great observers who can read body language that may signal dishonesty. And don't try to evade a reporter's question. If you can't answer it, say so and explain why. If you don't know the answer, say so, offer to find out, and say you'll get it to him/her within a specific period of time. Then do so.

#### **Don't play favourites**

Don't favour one news outlet or reporter over others by giving one an important news story and not giving it to others. That's unfair not only to the outlet but also to its audience. On the other hand, if a reporter comes up with a story idea, don't call a news conference and tell everyone else about it. In some cases, it may make sense to offer an outlet an exclusive story, but these situations are exceptions.

## **Respect the public**

What any organization does can affect a good many people in the community, and these people have a right to honest reports about your activities.

## **Say “thanks” when relevant**

If a reporter goes beyond the call of duty to help you out, a thank you is appropriate. If she/he does an excellent job on a story, a compliment is in order.

## **2. *Be a reliable source of information***

Give reporters the interesting and timely stories and pictures they want, when they want them, and in the form in which they can easily use them.

### **Be aware of deadlines and lead times**

Know media deadlines. Be aware of how lead times vary from media to media. For example, a magazine may have a lead time of six months, while radio stations can broadcast immediately.

### **Make spokespeople available**

If the journalist can't reach someone at your organization, the story either may not run or may run without any input from you. Ensure the appropriate contact info for public relations matters (names, phone numbers/email addresses) are on your website.

### **Respond quickly to media enquires and requests**

When a reporter contacts you, respond as promptly as possible. If you can't do so immediately, call or email to acknowledge the request and say are working on it and will get back her/him ASAP.

### **Answer questions**

When it comes to answering questions, there are only three acceptable responses:

- 1) Here it is.
- 2) I don't know but I'll find out for you, and,
- 3) I know but I can't tell you now because ...

A “no comment” is not one of the three alternatives. Nor is speaking to reporters “off the record.” Even if you stipulate that you are providing information as background to help the reporter understand an event or situation, there’s no guarantee it won’t be published or aired. Dealing with reporters on a not-for-attribution basis (i.e., you can use what I say but don’t use my name) also can be risky and puts the reporter in an awkward position when their role is to report on what they’ve uncovered.

### **3. *Don’t beg or complain***

Selecting the news is the media’s job, so don’t beg to have your stories used. It implies that your stuff isn’t newsworthy in itself. In addition, don’t complain – about story treatment, placement, or information selected for the story. If you have a good reason to be upset – a fact is incorrect, you were misquoted, etc. – don’t automatically fire off an angry or insulting letter to the editor. If a correction is warranted, here are some options:

- Talk to the reporter.
- Email the reporter and/or the department editor asking for a correction. Send any necessary documents that prove incorrect facts were used. Take this step only when the error can have a detrimental impact on your branch and/or the Legion overall.
- Write a letter correcting the error for the letters to the editor section.

**Don’t mix up facts and opinions. You have no right (and it won’t get you anywhere) to complain about a columnist’s point of view. If there’s a factual error though, you can ask for it to be corrected.**

### **Don’t interfere with the editorial process**

Don’t ask to check the story before it’s printed or goes to air. It’s fine to ask about when a story will run will run if you know the reporter well or he/she has approached you for the story. Don’t ask for clippings or tear sheets or tapes. If you want them, hire a clipping or transcript service.

You also have no right to ask the news media to suppress or kill a story. It's asking journalists to betray their trust. The only way to keep unfavourable stories out of the media is to keep situations that produce them from taking place.

### **Don't get into a fight with the news media**

Remember the old saying: You can't win a fight with an organization that buys ink by the barrel. You risk not only looking foolish in the reporter's and your public's eyes. Even worse, your reaction can become the news.

## **4. *Use tried-and-true media relations strategies and tactics***

Like any relationship, you have to put thought and effort into how you deal with the news media.

### **Show you understand how the media works**

Provide television and newspapers with visuals or ideas for visuals.

### **If you're comfortable doing it, occasionally pitch your story idea by telephone.**

Email pitches are fine, but telephone calls can yield better results. Conversations add the human touch and allow for give-and-take. However, you must make your pitch brief: no more than 30 seconds.

### **Remember the four F's**

Be fast, fair, frank, and friendly. Be fast in getting back to a reporter who calls. Be fair and share hard news with all reporters. Be frank: honest, upfront, and as willing to share bad news as good. Be friendly— but don't fawn. It sends the wrong message.

### **Think people and stories**

Tell stories about people – Veterans, customers, or someone from a charity that has benefitted from what your branch has to offer. (Obtain their permission to use those quotes in articles and news stories.)

### **Reach out to media**

Attract media attention, and hopefully, earn coverage in a more creative way. Consider involving media personalities in your event.



## Special events – logistics & creativity

This section covers special events designed bring internal or external audiences together. Unlike media events, organized to deliver information to and/or engage with reporters, the special event succeeds or fails based on public attendance and other factors. Note that the PRO may choose to publicize a special event by earning space or time in the news media.

Some examples of traditional branch special events that may be organized by or with the help of the PRO include cheque presentations, honours and awards ceremonies, volunteer appreciation events, New Year's levees, and Remembrance ceremonies.

### **SPECIAL EVENT PLANNING**

The success of your special event depends on your planning and organizational skills. Create a checklist or calendar where you identify tasks, the people responsible for them, and key deadlines. Your special event plan will include the following decisions.

### **CREATIVE THEME**

The creative theme must appeal to the target audience, match the tone of the event, and stand out from run-of-the-mill clichéd themes. You must be able to use elements of the theme throughout the event, from invitations and food selection to decorations and activities.

Along with the theme, decisions must be made on the choice of colour or colours as well as any graphics to be used. These decisions must be in line with the tone and content of the theme if you want to create the proper environment at the venue.

### **EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Consider the equipment and supplies you may need, including lighting, visual aids, tables, a PA system, name cards, registration table, etc.



## REGISTRATION AND/OR PAYMENT AREA

Since the registration area provides the guest with his/her first impression of the event and your organization, it is essential that it run smoothly. Any long wait or discourtesy can create a negative feeling that could taint her/his perception of the entire event.

**TIP:** Make sure that the people working in registration are knowledgeable and professional.

## PROVISIONS FOR MEDIA

If your event is newsworthy and you invite media to attend, set aside a spot where representatives can check in and pick up materials. If the spot is difficult to find, explain the location in the media advisory. Designate someone to greet the media. If the event is a dinner, you can include a dinner ticket with the advisory, or invite the media to come afterwards. At the very least, provide a special table and serve them coffee.

## SPECIAL GUESTS

When inviting opinion leaders, community leaders or guest speakers to an event, you may want to make preliminary contact three to six months ahead of time. Priority publics should be invited – in writing – six weeks in advance. Follow up with an email or phone call two to three weeks later.

## CROWD PLEASERS

Crowd pleasers include special guests, celebrities, contests and prize draws, and exhibits and displays.

- **Contests and prize draws**

Many people enjoy contests even if they don't provide a stringent test of their skills. Trivia contests, and guessing games are popular. Be sure your signage makes the rules clear. On a more random basis, there are door prizes and spot prizes, i.e., a lucky chair, 10th person to pay, etc. See also legal considerations for contests.

## • Exhibits and displays

An exhibit or display can enhance your special event by providing a strong visual component as well as a place to assemble information on your branch or on the event itself.

## • Special guests/celebrities

Some special guests are invited because they appeal to your event audience and can help increase attendance. Others are invited for “political” purposes – literally because they are politicians who would be interested in your work, or figuratively because they are branch or Legion leaders.

One category of special guest is the celebrity. Celebrities certainly can help draw a crowd as well as make a special event exciting and newsworthy. The celebrity can be an athlete, media personality, author, musician, actor, or comedian. Most celebrities appreciate having something specific to do. Some options include emceeing, judging, or taking part in a contest.

### **PROMOTING THE EVENT**

If you have an email list of possible attendees, consider using [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com) or [guestlist.com](http://guestlist.com) for a small charge.

### **TIPS ON PUBLICIZING YOUR SPECIAL EVENT – BEFORE & AFTER**

If your special event is newsworthy, here are some ways to make it even more appealing and relevant to editors and reporters.

- Add small, inexpensive, yet out-of-the-ordinary touches to the event in the planning stage. To attract media attention, think visually.
- Do a publicity stunt before the event to draw the media’s attention.
- Invite media personalities to take part in the event, not just cover it.
- Create a day, week, or month observance as a tie in.
- Pitch a local community cable channel to cover the event.
- Take photographs at the event and supply them to community newspapers with a news release. The photographs also can be posted on the organization’s website and used on social media.

- Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper thanking participants and/or volunteers.
- Do a creative, interesting, and/or unusual poll or survey during the event and send the results to the media.
- Invite a celebrity to participate. Make sure the celebrity “fits” with your organization.
- Kick off the event in a creative – even unusual – way. Think photo ops.
- Plan creative contests for participants.
- Send the results of any significant fundraising totals to the media. If possible, include information on how that specific amount of money will help the organization help others in the community.
- Make note of positive comments made verbally or in writing by participants and obtain permission to use them as testimonials the following year.

## EVENT PHOTOS

If you take photos at a special event – to use in social media or on your website – consider the following. Photos should be:

- timely and interesting to many.
- look natural – not staged.
- be of the highest quality.
- explain or illustrate the story at a glance.
- avoid the cliché events – ribbon cuttings, sod turnings, cheque presentations, grip and grins.

**TIP:** Grip-and-grin pictures of two people facing the camera as they shake hands, are mundane – even boring. Use a little imagination? If you want to score with media, provide a photo that offers a different perspective, a display of appropriate emotion, or a creative – even symbolic – shot.

# Effective donor relations

How you relate to donors will depend on the type of donation you sought and received. Some individuals and businesses may donate money or make in-kind contributions with no expectation of any quid pro quo (corporate philanthropy). They still should be thanked, often publicly, but unlike other types of donations, you do not have to meet specific obligations to them.

If the agreement you have made with the donor is based on mutual benefits (cause-related marketing or corporate sponsorship), it is absolutely vital that you deliver what you promised in return for the donation. Check the box below before you approach a potential donor so you can be clear about what you're asking for and what you are willing to do in return for the donation.

**Corporate philanthropy** – Recognizing corporate obligations and responsibilities to the community or society at large by making monetary or other donations to charitable or other worthwhile organizations. In-kind donations, for example, are gifts of products or gift certificates. Members of the public responding to the branch's request for funds for various needs, from building improvements to special initiatives to help Veterans.

**Cause-related marketing** – A business arrangement between an organization and a nonprofit entity. Although there are elements of philanthropy, it's also a marketing technique. By being known to have provided a donation to the branch or a branch activity, the donor can enhance its corporate reputation and image with customers. One example of this type of initiative is where the company contributes money when products are sold.

**Corporate sponsorship** – Providing support to an event or a cause by devoting corporate resources in exchange for an opportunity to be part of an event or program and, hopefully, increase sales. The corporate donor may be one of several sponsors or may pay a premium price for exclusivity and even naming rights. Corporate donors are most likely to donate money or make in-kind donations if the event, for example, will attract many participants and, potentially, earn positive media coverage.

## PROCURING THE DONATION

If you are looking for in-kind prizes or cash donations, you will need an official letter to send to potential donors. The letter, on official letterhead, should clearly explain what you would like from the recipient and when the “gift” is needed. Explain what you will do with the donation as well as how you will thank the donor in a public way, i.e., talk about it on social media, create posters and/or put the corporate name on signage.

**When you create your potential donor list for your next campaign, note those that have given before and be sure to acknowledge their support when you approach them again. In other words, make them feel good about their donation. When a donor expresses satisfaction with your organization through word of mouth, it can attract other donors.**

## DONOR RECORDS ARE A KEY TO SUCCESS

Create a donor master list to record such information as a brief description of the donation, the amount donated and/or the retail value of any in-kind donation, the donor contact information (name, telephone number, Canada Post and email addresses), and any instructions about donation pick-up or delivery. You also can add donor Twitter handles if you play This list will be invaluable at all stages of your relationship, from ensuring you have fulfilled all commitments to made to prepare and send personalized thank-you letters.

## POPULAR AND EFFECTIVE WAYS TO THANK AND RECOGNIZE DONORS

To keep all kinds of regular and new donors happy, create a donor recognition plan and follow it faithfully. Below are some ways to say “thank you.”

**Thank-you letters.** One of the most acceptable ways to say thank you is through a letter. If you have an electronic version of your letterhead, email your official thank-you letters. If not, you can mail or hand-deliver them. Ensure you have spelled the donor’s name correctly and have a prominent member of your organization sign it. Confirm that you delivered all you promised in return for the donation (signage at an event, mention in a newsletter and/or on your website, etc.)

**Invitations to official ceremonies.** You can recognize major or regular donors by issuing a personal invitation to any official ceremony you have planned. This ceremony could be a kick-off, special presentation, or closing ceremony.

**Donor walls and plaques.** These are ideal ways to offer permanent recognition. Place the donor wall and/or plaque where all your visitors can see it/them.

**Certificates of appreciation.** These certificates, printed on high-quality paper, are given to the longstanding or major donors. They may be framed for added value.

**Recognition events.** The recognition must reflect the size of the gift, but it should never be expensive. Donors are not impressed when they receive a gift that takes money away from the cause to which they donated in the first place.

**Naming opportunities.** Along with title events, consider offering naming opportunities for activities, campaigns, and programs. Although these are most often promoted to solicit the donation, they also can be used as a way to say thank you. Naming opportunities provide recognition as the corporate or individual name is associated with the endeavour.

**Newsletter articles.** Write a story focusing on specific donors and place it in your newsletter. Ensure that the donors named receive copies. However, consider that if you do this, unless the donation is unique and remarkable in some way, you may need to thank all donors in a similar manner or risk some of them feeling slighted.

**Mass media coverage.** Recognize individual donors who make significant donations of money or time by pitching stories in their community newspapers.

**Social media.** Recognize donors on your Facebook page and tweet about their contributions.

**Special web pages.** Many organizations set up special Web pages, usually with links to the donors' sites, to thank contributors.

**Note that donations of time must also be recognized. Most branches would have difficulty doing anything if it were not for their dedicated and hard-working volunteers. Consider doing something special for your volunteers during National Volunteer Week in April, or indeed, at any other time or times that are appropriate. Always say thank you and say it often.**

# Introduction to social media

Social media is a great way for PROs to communicate with members, potential members, branch customers, neighbours, and like-minded people around the world.

Let's look at two of the most popular sites: Facebook and Twitter. If your branch doesn't have an account with one or both, here's some information to get you started:

[www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Twitter-Account](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Twitter-Account)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/create/>

There are other social media sites, including Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr and Tumbler, but staying active on one or two media sites calls for a significant investment of your time. It's better to do really well on one or two of them than to overextend yourself and be mediocre on three or four.

Ideally, you use social media to generate two-way conversations with friends (Facebook) and followers (Twitter), but at the very least, you can share news about what is happening at your branch. Ideally, you will get lots of retweets and replies on Twitter and plenty of likes and comments on your Facebook page, but also be prepared for criticism – fair and unfair.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS**

**Always be aware that you are making public comments on behalf of your branch. Anything posted on social media is viewed as a message from everyone there.**

**Your branch's Facebook and Twitter profile photos communicate your brand. Use one consistently so it becomes recognizable.**

**Share, like and/or retweet posts and tweets you feel are relevant or especially interesting. Sometimes, just do it because the post is fun and you want your friends and/or followers to enjoy it too.**



Don't just talk AT people, talk TO them. After all, you want to generate conversations.

Do promote branch activities and events but also offer other interesting and original content your followers and friends will enjoy.

Respond to questions, comments and kudos promptly, and be equally willing to respond as quickly to complaints. However, no matter how rude a comment may be, never engage. Never post denigrating comments about or to a specific person or any group of people.

Use social media accounts to promote other platforms such as your website.

Use social media to thank your donors and people who come to your events.

Update regularly by creating new posts or sharing others. If you don't, your account will seem stale and you could lose friends and followers.

Add photos, graphics and videos to draw attention to your posts.

Block trolls who display disruptive traits including unacceptable language, social negativity and false information.

Promote your social media sites on your website, in your newsletter, on signage at events and in letters.

Thank and compliment your volunteers, using their names (with permission) on Facebook or in tweets using their Twitter handles.

Learn about hashtags and use them <https://support.twitter.com/articles/49309#>

Find more social media resources on the Legion's Member Services Website <http://portal.legion.ca>, under *Branch and Command Resources / Marketing and Public Relations*.



## Legion messaging

PROs at every Legion level, along with other leaders, must help incorporate Legion values and culture in everything we say and do. If we don't, the messages we send will not resonate.

For example, we must provide excellent customer service to everyone who walks through a branch door. They all must feel welcome – whether they're members or not – and whether it's their first visit or just one of many. They deserve to be served by branch volunteers and staff who have been properly prepared and trained. And they certainly deserve to be treated with respect.

Providing top-notch customer service pays off in the long run. When visitors and members have positive experiences at a branch they not only come back but also will tell their friends, post positive comments on social media sites, and spread the word, generating positive feedback for the branch and for the Legion overall.

When branch PROs share news about their activities and generosity on social media or reach out to reporters to publicize branch accomplishments, that's good for the Legion as a whole. And when this media spotlight is used to link the activity or donation to how it supports the Legion's mandate, a positive light shines on all of us.

Wrap yourself in the Legion blanket whenever you can by communicating our shared vision to be seen as Canada's most highly respected Veteran and community service organization.

PROs also craft messages for key influencers – those small numbers of people in the neighbourhood, the Legion, the community and society at large – who are strong links in the word-of-mouth chain.

## MESSAGING GUIDELINES

When you go public or social media or in the mass media about a donation your branch made to Veterans, be clear if it's from general funds or your branch Poppy Fund. If the donation is from the Poppy Fund, indicate how your donation supports Veterans and their families in your community.

When you honour the service and sacrifice of Canada's Veterans, emphasize the fact that we are here for ALL Veterans regardless of when or where they served. If you're unsure of who is considered a Veteran, be sure to check it out here: <http://www.legion.ca/support-for-veterans/who-we-serve>

When you speak about supporting youth, seniors, and various community causes, tie it back to the Legion's long history in serving our communities.

When you communicate about your Poppy Campaign, be sure to use the term poppy *donations* NOT poppy *sales*.

Everyone knows most branches have bars, but avoid photographs of people drinking or go easy on photos of people at tables with a lot of bottles, jugs, and glasses. If speaking with media about your bar or entertainment activities, always bring the message back to proceeds from those activities supporting the Legion Branch, which in turn allows us to be here for Veterans and their families.

# Problem solving & legal issues

When bad news breaks, such as negative coverage in traditional media or snarky comments on social media, a PRO may be called upon to advise the executive board on how to deal with it.

Here's some advice you can offer:

- Do not ignore it in the hope it will just go away. Respond quickly and truthfully, and if the criticism is fair, explain how corrections will be made.
- Remind them that caring adds to your credibility, so show your concern for anyone who has been harmed by any words or actions.

**If anything does go wrong, and you need more help than is given in this manual, you can reach out to the Dominion Command communications manager, Nujma Bond, for advice: [nbond@Legion.ca](mailto:nbond@Legion.ca).**

The best way to avoid many problems, is to avoid them in the first place. Here are a few notes on some of the legal issues that can affect Legion representatives as they perform their duties.

## **1. *Libel and slander laws***

Defamation is a statement that damages a person's reputation and/or exposes him/her to hatred, contempt or ridicule or affects the person's livelihood or financial credit. Libel can occur when published or broadcast information falsely defames someone's character. When the defamation occurs in oral communication, it is called slander. Note that for defamation to occur, the person need not be named. A description that makes the person recognizable to the public could suffice for a lawsuit.

## **2. *Invasion of privacy***

Avoid infringing on someone's privacy when taking and publicly sharing their photos. When you ask people to pose for a photograph and they do, they have given implied consent. If the photograph is not obviously posed, however, you must obtain verbal consent or a written release from each subject. (If the subject is a child, you must obtain a release from the legal guardian.)

You do not need a release when the photograph records a public event, but if the photograph is to be used for promotional purposes and individuals are identifiable, obtain a release even if the event is public.

You may want to ask members to sign blanket releases when they join or renew their memberships. This will allow you to use their photos at public events without having them sign a release form each time. Note that even if the subject has signed the blanket release, be courteous and show them the photo before posting it.

**See a sample photo/video release form on the Member Services Website at <https://portal.legion.ca>, under *Branch and Command Resources / Marketing and Public Relations***

## **3. *Liability***

Any branch activity could potentially lead to suits for damages. Even if you carry public liability insurance, advise everyone to take precautions by paying particular attention to safety issues.

## **4. *Copyright infringement***

Copyright covers anything original and in some permanent form, including songs, books, films, essays, and photographs. It can even include distinctive titles. The copyright owner controls any reproduction the work, in whole or in substantial part. Note that copyright extends to Canadian government documents.

For more information on copyright law: [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/h\\_wro2281.html](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/h_wro2281.html)

**TIP:** Do not use copyrighted material such as artwork and photos without either the express written consent of the copyright holder and/or without paying required fees and royalties.

**5. Appropriation**

Appropriation involves using someone's name, voice, or well-known characteristic without her/his permission. Examples of appropriation include using part of someone's copyright song or his/her photograph without express and, often, written permission.

**6. Plagiarism**

Even if material is not copyrighted, you still can land in hot water. You may be guilty of plagiarism if you use anyone's material – in whole or in part – and claim it as your own.

**7. Raffles, bingos and other contests**

Before you decide to hold a raffle, conduct bingo games or set up a contest, check applicable laws and regulations set out by the relevant authority (your municipality or province) and/or the terms and provisions set out in Canada's Criminal Code. For the latter, check out <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/page-49.html>

## Glossary/terminology

**Anchor** – A person on a TV news program who reads news items and introduces stories gathered in the field.

**Angle** – The approach or perspective from which a news fact, event or situation is viewed or the emphasis chosen for a story.

**Assignment editor** – The manager in a news outlet responsible for assigning reporters to cover specific stories and events.

**Assignment** – An instruction given to a reporter to cover and event or write about a situation.

**Attribution** – The identification of the source of a fact, judgment, or quotation.

**Audience** – Those to whom a message is directed. (Also see publics and stakeholders) This term also describes specific media readers, listeners or viewers.

**Backgrounder** – A document that provides in-depth information on an organization, event or other subject matter. It's often used to supplement news materials sent to the media.

**Beat** – the area or subject field assigned to a reporter. This can include city, education, military, etc.

**Blog** – A combination of Web+Log, blogs kept by some individuals are much like online journals or diaries. When written on behalf of organizations, they are much more professional. Some individual bloggers, also very professional, make names for themselves by becoming experts and/or opinion leaders on specific subject matter.

**Buzz**– This term describes the excitement generated by a product, celebrity, company, etc. It's often caused by extensive media coverage.

**Byline** - The writer's name, usually at the head of the story.

**Call-in** – A radio or TV program that broadcasts telephone conversations with listeners or viewers.

**Caption** – The wording under a photo, illustration or cartoon.  
(Also outline)

**Column** - A regularly appearing signed story of opinion or analysis.

**Community newspaper** – published for a specific geographical area. Community newspapers may be weekly, biweekly, monthly, bimonthly, etc. (*Also see special interest newspapers.*)

**Copy** – Anything written for publication or broadcast. This includes news copy, advertising copy, editorial copy, etc.

**Correction** - Errors that reach publication are retracted or corrected if they are serious or if someone demands a correction.

**Daily** – A newspaper published at least six days a week.

**Deadline** – The latest time for material to reach a reporter for it to be included in his/her story.

**Editorial** – An opinion piece written by the editorial page editor or another member of the editorial board. It generally appears on the editorial page. Guest editorial – one written by an outsider.

**Editorialize** – To express subjective opinion(s) in a news story.

**Embargo** – Asking the media to not print or broadcast a story until an agreed upon date or specified time.

**Exclusive** – A story only one reporter or outlet has.

**Facebook event** – A feature to help organize events, gather RSVPs, and respond to invitations.

**Facebook friends** – people and organizations with whom you connect and share information.

**Facebook live** – A feature on Facebook that allows for the live video viewing of an event or activity.

**Fact sheet** – A document, usually one page, that provides details, often in bulleted point form, on an organization, event or other subject matter. It's often used to supplement news materials sent to the media.

**Flag** – The printed title of a newspaper on page one or on the cover of a periodical.

**Follower** – A person in charge of a social media account who subscribes to your account.



**Giveaways** – Gifts and prizes awarded to contestants or audience members.

**Goal** – A long-term, long-sighted result to be achieved. Goals often are aspirational and nonspecific, such as developing a good relationship with a particular group or increasing membership.

**Google alerts** – A content change detection and notification service that sends emails to the user when it finds new results – such as web pages, newspaper articles, or blogs – that match the user's search term(s).

**Graphics** – All visual materials such as artwork, charts, maps, and still photos.

**Hashtag** – Putting the hashtag symbol (#) before a keyword or phrase to facilitate Twitter searches. Clicking on a hash tagged word in any social media message brings up other tweets that use that hashtag.

**Headline (head)** – The words at the beginning of all printed news, feature and editorial items. (Note: in major dailies, reporters do not usually write headlines – headline writers do this job.)

**Image** – How a person or organization appears to the general public. Also refers to a photographic or visual representation of a person or object.

**Influencer** – An individual or small group of individuals whose expressed opinions on certain issues can help form, reinforce or change others' opinions and behaviours. Their influence may derive from their knowledge and expertise and/or celebrity status and/or personal experience.

**In-kind donation** – A form of charitable giving where a business donates goods and/or services.

**Lead** – A print news story's opening paragraph. Also the beginning of a radio or TV news story. The lead is used to capture attention, prepare the audience for the story, and set the story's tone.

Lead story – The first story in the newscast.

**Lead time** – The interval between a media deadline for the receipt of editorial material and the time of its appearance in or on the media. Lead times vary. Radio has a short lead-time, while magazines could need a month or more.

**Masthead** – The formal statement of the publication’s name, officers, place of publication, and other descriptive information. It usually is found on the op-ed or editorial page.

**Media advisory** – A written notice sent to media providing information (who, what, when, where, and why) on a media event or other newsworthy happening.

**Mention** – When a Twitter user includes someone else’s @username in a tweet. It’s often done to initiate or continue a conversation, thank the user, or express approval overall.

**News conference** – Gathering reporters in one place so they can be provided with the same information at the same time.

**News hole** – The space or time in the news media allotted to news.

**News release** – A story prepared and issued to the media.

**Op-ed page** – In many newspapers, this is the page opposite the editorial page. It can contain guest opinion pieces and letters to the editor.

**Objective** – The specific result (knowledge, opinion, action) sought with a specific audience.

**Periodical** – A publication that appears on a regular basis. Magazines are a type of periodical.

**Placeline** – The placeline identifies the geographical location of the print news story. It is at the beginning of the lead. Also called the **dateline**.

**Plug** – A free and favourable mention in media.

**Promo** – A broadcast message promoting a radio or television station, a program, or an event with which the station is involved.

**Publics** – individuals or groups of stakeholders who can affect or be affected by the organization’s actions, policies, and procedures. Publics can form when an organization determines it wants or needs something from a specific group or they may form themselves based on their interest in issues surrounding an organization. They can be defined in a common way such as members, customers, voters, patrons, etc.

**Stakeholders** – Individuals or groups who can be affected by an organization’s decisions and actions and/or whose decisions and actions can affect the organization in a positive or negative way.

**Public access** – The availability of broadcast facilities and time for use by community interest groups, a key condition for most cable TV operations.

**Public relations** – Building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with an organization’s publics through timely and honest communications, events and activities undertaken in the public interest, and a consistent adherence to the organization’s brand, including its core values.

**Puff or puffery** – The use of unwarranted superlatives, exaggerations, hyperbole, etc. Self-serving news releases and gushing stories often are referred to as **puff pieces**.

**Purchase-triggered donations** – A type of cause-related marketing, this involves a business donating a specific amount or percent of money to an organization whenever a specific product is sold.

**Quotation** – Words attributed to a specific person.

**Reply** – A Twitter action where a user responds to a tweet to begin a conversation with the creator.

**Reporter** – A journalist who gathers information and writes news stories for her/his media outlet.

**Return on investment (ROI)** – A measurement of the return an organization receives on its public relations expenditures. While the ROI can directly affect the organization’s bottom line by increasing sales, in some cases there is no direct or immediate effect. ROI may be measured through indirect contributions to fiscal success such as demonstrably enhancing the image of the organization and/or creating a following for the product or service.

**Retweet** – Clicking on the “retweet” button allows you to share the original tweet with your followers and attribute it to the tweet creator.

**Scoop** – The first story to break the news on a major event.

**Seasonableness** – Timeliness tied to a period of the year that keeps coming back (i.e., Christmas, Ramadan, Hanukkah, Thanksgiving, Halloween, etc.). The seasonableness may also refer to an anniversary such as Sept. 11, July 1, etc.

**Soundbite** – A succinct (and often catchy) message that illustrates or encapsulates a story in just a few seconds.

**Source** – Any resource (human, printed, broadcast, etc.) reporters use for information.

**Special interest newspapers** – publications aimed at particular segments of people, professions, etc. These include college, university, entertainment, business, and ethnic newspapers.

**Stakeholders** – those individuals or groups who can affect or be affected by the Legion's actions, policies, and procedures. Stakeholders affect us in different ways. Some can have a significant impact on the Legion's ability to thrive – even survive – while the influence of others is minimal.

**Strategy** – the means (overall concept, approach, or general plan) for reaching a goal or objective.

**Stylebook** – a manual prescribing the forms a writer must follow when preparing materials for the news media. The stylebook used for print is the *Canadian Press Stylebook*. The broadcast version is the *Broadcast News Style Guide*.

**Subhead** – One- and sometimes two-line head (usually in boldface type) inserted in a long story at intervals for emphasis or to break up a long column of type.

**Tactics** – the how-to's, i.e., things to do to implement a strategy to reach those whose support will help or whose opposition will hinder the success of a plan.

**Talk show** – A moderator and guest(s) discuss topical issues, events, etc. When these programs feature telephone conversations with listeners or viewers, they are **call-ins**.

**Troll** – Someone who deliberately creates controversy online by making inflammatory comments. Trolls often harass and personally attack others –often viciously.

**Twitter handle** – Someone's @username such as @RoyalCdnLegion.

**Word of mouth (WOM)** – The passing of information in an informal, person-to-person manner. A form of face-to-face and personal communications, WOM is extremely credible.

*Our mission is to serve  
Veterans, which includes  
serving military and RCMP  
members and their families;  
to promote Remembrance;  
and to serve our communities  
and our country.*

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